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Viennese Memories of History and Horrors

Abstract

World cities, including Vienna, are notorious for their crime history and for the imaginary crimes in fiction and film associated with them. The works of authors such as Musil, Canetti, Doderer, Jelinek, and Rabinovici, and Reed's film *The Third Man* portray Vienna as a setting of crimes.

"Conventional" crimes in literature and films include serial murders, crimes of passion, as well as underworld and gangster activities. These crimes pale in comparison with the crimes committed during the Nazi era and covered up thereafter. Aichinger in "Strassen und Plätze" calls to mind atrocities that occurred at different locations in Vienna. Only recently such crime sites have been marked by memorial plates. This new culture of memory counteracts the collective amnesia of the postwar era.

The article explores Vienna's rivaling memories. The tourist industry casts Vienna as the city of dreams and waltzes, and critical literature portrays it as the city where the deportation of Jews was implemented even faster and more thoroughly than in Germany. Literary and autobiographical works by Viennese authors of different generations, e.g. Spiel, Aichinger, Beckermann, and Schindel reveal the ambivalence of Viennese forgetting and commemorating.

Keywords

Austria, Vienna, crime history, Film, Musil, Canetti, Doderer, Jelinek, and Rabinovici, Reed, *The Third Man*, Nazi era, Nazi, World War II, Aichinger, *Strassen und Plätze*, collective amnesia, post-war, postwar, memory, Viennese authors, Spiel, Aichinger, Beckermann, Schindel, forgetting

Viennese Memories of History and Horrors

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World cities are famous not only for their culture and architecture, but also for the cultural memory they preserve, and crimes and atrocities play an important role in urban cultural memory. This is as true for Paris, whose social problems were portrayed by authors from Émile Zola (*Le Ventre de Paris* [The Belly of Paris; 1873]) to Claire Goll (*Ein Mensch ertrinkt* [Someone's Drowning; 1988]), as it is for Chicago, with its lore of the crimes of the prohibition era and figures like Al Capone and Dr. H. H. Holmes, the serial killer associated with the 1893 World Fair (for example, see Thrasher's *The Gang* [1963] and Larson's *The Devil in the White City* [2004]). There is the legacy of piracy in New Orleans—Jean Lafitte—as well as sensational murderers such as the notorious Axeman, and New York has its gang history, with crime families and figures such as Paul Kelly, Monk Eastman, and “Tic Toc” Tannenbaum. Films like *The Godfather* [1972] and *The Gangs of New York* [2002], television series like *The Sopranos*, and crime tours in such cities cater to our fascination with the dark side of the city.¹

Since the dawn of modernity, literature, film, and the media have established lasting associations between the metropolis and crime. Perhaps the most powerful representation of urban crime in the early twentieth century was Fritz Lang's film *M* (1931; contemporary authors still quote the film—consider Rabinovici's *Suche nach M* [1997]). Inspired by Peter Kürten, the so-called Vampire of Düsseldorf, Lang transposed his serial killer to Berlin, the center of the Weimar Republic.² Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1930), featuring the underworld milieu of the Weimar Republic, and

Rainer Werner Fassbinder's film based on Döblin's novel (1983) are likewise set in Berlin and its surroundings, as is Gertrud Kolmar's narrative on racism, child abuse, and murder, *Eine jüdische Mutter* (A Jewish Mother; posthumous, 1965).

Within cities certain locations and neighborhoods have become sites of memory in correlation to specific crimes and crime figures, some of them historical, others imaginary. They make modern cityscapes monuments to transgression against the very civilization they foster and are proud to display. Alongside imagined crimes, historical crime scenes are part of a secret memory topography, for example the parking lot on Chicago's North Clark Street, scene of the Valentine's Day Massacre; the Berlin Landwehrkanal, site of the murders of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht; and the foggy streets of London's Whitechapel, Jack the Ripper's stomping grounds (see Cornwell). These places have engaged the imagination of researchers, literary authors, and travelers for generations. Likewise, Austria's capital is associated with crime stories and historical crimes, many of them documented in the Kriminalmuseum in the Second District's Große Sperlgasse. Then there is Vienna's association with the Hitler regime, which turned the city into a prison for the intended victims of the Nazi genocide, as Ruth Klüger states in her autobiography, *weiter leben* (Still Alive; 1995): "This Vienna, which I had not been able to escape, was a prison, my first, and the sole topic of conversation was escape—or rather, emigration" (19).

A long literary tradition links Vienna's cityscape with fictional and actual crimes—a few examples may suffice. Adalbert Stifter's *Turmalin* (1851), a story of adultery, child abduction, and abuse by the father suggests that hidden beneath Vienna's well-ordered social surface-structure lie chaos and forbidden passion. Franz Grillparzer's *Der arme Spielmann* (The Poor Fiddler; 1847) explores the broken life of a man who was oppressed by his father, a corrupt politician, and his ruthless brothers. Jakob's story is set in the poor and seedy parts of Vienna, the Brigittenau and the Augarten, which housed a culture of exploitation and sexual licentiousness that Grillparzer uncovers. Before his career took off, Grillparzer himself had lived with his mother in the squalor of Vienna's slums and learned about the plight of the poor first-hand. Later works such as Joseph Roth's *Märchen der 1002. Nacht* (Tale of the 1002nd Night;

1939), Ödon von Horvath's *Geschichten aus dem Wiener Wald* (Stories from the Vienna Wood; 1984), and Felix Salten's *Josephine Mutzenbacher* (1990) feature crooks, pimps, and prostitutes, and Robert Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (The Man without Qualities; 1930) introduces the serial killer Moosbrugger, whose particular brand of insanity provides a key to the condition of the larger society. Shady figures populate the "dark" novels of Heimito von Doderer and play an important role in *Die Strudlhofstiege* (The Strudlhof Steps; 1951) and *Die Dämonen* (The Demons; 1956). Elias Canetti's novel *Die Blendung* (Auto-da-fé; 1935) leads into similar milieux, where crimes run the gamut. So does Veza Canetti's *Die gelbe Strasse* (Yellow Street; 1989), originally published in the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* (Workers' Newspaper), showcasing exploitation, domestic violence, corruption, and the abuse of children. In all of these works particular sites and neighborhoods emerge as reference points mapping a cityscape of crime, including the Inner City, the Leopoldstadt—notably the Prater, the area close to the Danube Canal, and the working-class districts of the suburbs. The subterranean sewage canals also provide, as in Doderer, stimuli for the imagination.

The postwar film noir *The Third Man*, starring Orson Welles (1949; based on Graham Green's successful novel *The Third Man* or: *The Fallen Idol*), features Vienna as the setting for a cinematic drama involving the fictitious, ruthless black marketeer Harry Lime. The film takes place in the immediate postwar era which Klüger in *weiter leben* terms an "Urschleim" 'original slime,' registering her surprise that "the city was still there at all, for I had left it so far behind" (66), and which Ilse Aichinger associates with "Schleichhändler" 'Black Marketeers' (*Film und Verhängnis* 200). The area near the Hofburg, the waterways, and the famous amusement and recreational Prater area—especially the latter figures prominently in the famous dialogue on the Ferris wheel and seems indelibly associated with the figure of Lime. There is even a Harry Lime walking tour now that familiarizes tourists with the relevant sites. It is important to note that these very places were already associated with urban criminal activities in texts predating Welles' character and, as Elfriede Jelinek's *Die Klavierspielerin* (The Piano Teacher; 1986) reveals, they retained their dubious reputation long thereafter.

The interest in crime and criminals in literature and film is uni-

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versal; however, the direction this interest takes varies depending on the larger environment and its social structures and concerns. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries show an increasing fascination with the individual psyche in keeping with the prevailing interest in individual psychology. The fiction of the time explored the criminal mind and its quirks, including master criminals or criminal geniuses à la Edgar Wallace (1875-1932). In the interwar years the conditions causing individuals or groups to turn to crime began to draw increasing interest. Alexander Döblin's and Elias Canetti's fiction, for example, reflects the emerging preeminence of social theory and mass psychology as articulated in Sigmund Freud's later writing and by Wilhelm Reich and Hermann Broch (see Works Cited). After World War II the state-sanctioned Nazi crimes were the dominant issue, as well as various attempts to process or avoid the postwar trauma. The legal discourse of the Nuremberg Trials (1945-49) brought to the forefront a new concept of crime: crimes against humanity, with agents and agencies of the state furnishing new categories or crimes and criminals (Woetzel, Beigbeder). *The Third Man*, released just about the time that the Nuremberg Trials were drawing to a close, introduced an anonymous crime randomly affecting innocent people, namely the watering-down of penicillin for commercial gain. In the wake of the unprecedented crimes committed during the Second World War, *The Third Man* inscribed Vienna's topography with the timely theme of large-scale international crime. Considering the frequency with which the film is shown—Aichinger notes “no Sunday passes without it”—its crime topography became firmly inscribed on the collective imagination (“Der dritte Mann” 200).

As the scope and long-term impact of the Nazi genocide became obvious, the world public realized that more than just the countries under Nazi control and the immediate postwar situation in Europe had been affected by the Holocaust. Clearly, the “recent past” was to have long-term global ramifications, changing the way crime and criminals were thought of and written about. In their classic study on the detective novel, *Le roman policier (Der Detektivroman)*, Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac observed that the hatred that characterized the “age of the henchmen” gave the gothic novel impetus for renewal since an entire continent had been turned into a

slaughterhouse. The authors held that genocide and mass murder had obliterated all meaning and produced drama of a horrible innocence, a realm beyond reason, morality, and good and evil. These reflections imply the end of the traditional detective novel, because problem-solving and discovery in the conventional sense had been moved to the realm of the absurd. Boileau and Narcejac observe that precisely because the detective novel could no longer proclaim the triumph of logic, the victim now assumed a central position (158).³ Even the position of the victim, however, is undermined in the works of Elfriede Jelinek, for example in *Die Kinder der Toten* (Children of the Dead; 1995), where in idyllic alpine surroundings both victims and perpetrators are relegated to the realm of the absurd.

The naming and description of locations play an important role in the construction of a victim/survivor perspective. Günter Butzer observes that traditional textual topography served to evoke the presence of that which is absent and thereby to increase the verisimilitude of the narrative (52). This, among other things, is the role geographic specificity plays in many texts creating a Jewish panorama. Another important aspect is the shaping of an oppositional topography that neutralizes the icons of the dominant culture and emphasizes alternative sites. This is the case, for example, in Nadja Seelich's film *Kieselsteine* (Pebbles; 1982). Here, Vienna's famous sites are deliberately bypassed, while other locations—the area close to the Stadttempel, the only synagogue left intact after the Night of the Brown Shirts, located in the unobtrusive Seitenstettengasse; the lobby of the temple; the Naschmarkt, a famous open-air market; the Prater meadows; coffee houses associated with Jewish personalities; the Jewish section of the Zentralfriedhof, Vienna's main cemetery—move into the foreground. Certain sites are revisited from one text to the next, thereby intensifying their significance as Jewish narratives. For example, Ruth Beckermann's impressive photo documentary of the *Mazzesinsel* (1984), Vienna's Second District during the interwar period, drew its particular strength from earlier writing about this part of the city ranging from Schnitzler to Aichinger, and it in turn lent additional momentum to later works set in this part of town, such as Robert Schindel's strongly autobiographic novel *Gebürtig* (Native-born; 1997). The fact that the Jewish community

and the lifestyle evoked in these works no longer exist as a result of fascist “ethnic cleansing” draws attention to the criminal past.

Boileau and Narcejac insist that there is a qualitative difference in terms of the perception and portrayal of individual crimes as compared to the atrocities of the Second World War. They point out that the existential fear of those who lived through the destruction of World War II was so pervasive that it became impossible after that point to speak of victors. Survivors were all that was left, hence the qualitative difference in the perception and representation of crime after 1945. Boileau and Narcejac’s analysis was supported by post-1945 Germanophone writing. Authors of different generations and backgrounds shared outrage over and fascination with the topics of terror and large-scale crime, hence the alliance of former veterans and intended Nazi victims in the *Gruppe 47* (The Group of ’47), e.g. Günter Eich and Ilse Aichinger, Ingeborg Bachmann and Paul Celan. The impact of the narratives, autobiographies, documentaries, and other literature dealing with the horrors of the years of war and genocide on the following generations was of unprecedented intensity. The desire to find out what happened and who lived in certain places, including her own residence in Vienna’s Marc Aurel Straße, drives Ruth Beckermann’s work, e.g. *Wien Retour* (Return to Vienna: 1983), *Die papierene Brücke* (The Paper Bridge; 1987), and *Homemad(e)* (2002). Even though younger writers had not witnessed the atrocities of war and genocide, they wrote adeptly and concretely about the victims’ suffering, panic, and fright. Indeed, literary works, historical accounts, media reports, autobiographies, and the daily encounter with sites, marked and memorialized, kept the past from becoming the past (Boileau and Narcejac 167). “Conventional” crimes—crimes of revenge and passion, serial killings, and the underworld and gangster scene portrayed in prewar writing—pale in comparison with the Nazi atrocities. In her afterword to the new edition of Gertrud Kolmar’s *Die jüdische Mutter*, Esther Dischereit describes the lingering effect of the past in her city, Berlin:

I couldn’t move into her [Kolmar’s] house. It’s better to move into houses I know nothing about. The teachers’ lounge at the School of Our Lady was once the library in the home of some Jews. Or perhaps

I'm mistaken; perhaps it was the living room. I couldn't send my daughter there either. It's better if I know nothing of the schools and houses; then there are still possibilities. (196)

Since the end of the war, encountering the past in one's familiar environment has been an important theme and a dilemma in the writing of exiles and Shoah survivors and following generations. Ilse Aichinger writes in "Wien 1945, Kriegsende": "When the war was over, and along with it the Vienna Gestapo building we had been forced to live next to, my mother and I tried to load our remaining possessions on a cart and pull it up Marc-Aurel Straße to Josefsstadt, where we hoped to find a place to stay for a while." It is the same street where, as she remembers in "Der Kai, 1944" "The Dock," "two children who, in 1940, had run up and down Marc-Aurel Straße—thin children in dark blue coats with the yellow stars on them. It was a kind of game for them, the street down to the Gestapo . . ." (*Film und Verhängnis* [Film and Fate] 56 and 53). In Ruth Beckermann's film *Die papierene Brücke* (1986) the Marc-Aurel Straße, leading down to the Danube dock, is configured as a site of memory as well. The voiceover mentions the Jewish-sounding names of earlier residents, and the extinction of Jewish life there and in Central Europe in general is the overall theme of the film.

For many authors, thoughts of Vienna stir up anxiety as well as affection, for example Hilde Spiel, who went into exile in London but after the war made several attempts to return. Despite the resentments and prejudices she encountered on the part of non-Jewish intellectuals, she confessed an undying love for Vienna ("Ich lebe gern in Österreich"). In her essays Spiel evokes over and over again the splendor of prewar Vienna with its theaters and coffeehouses, and her childhood environment in the Nineteenth District. Her nostalgia reveals that she considers these sites part of a lost world, but she does not tire of reconstructing them in her imagination. For Erich Fried, who had to leave Vienna at a younger age than Spiel, the city is primarily associated with anxiety. His nostalgia is less pronounced than Spiel's, and yet he, too, feels the compulsion to return, even if only for a visit. In his 1946 poem "An Österreich" (To Austria), Fried expresses his trepidation prior to returning to the city where his father was murdered and which he escaped just in time:

I am afraid to return to you
and join in atoning for a crime I didn't commit.
I will keep at bay the false penitents
and you will still often be flush with deceit! (Hinderer et al. 6)

Elisabeth Freundlich's memoir of her Viennese Jewish family, *Der Seelenvogel* (The Soul Bird; 1986), begins with a complaint about her grandparents' mistaken notion that Austria's soil was "Heimaterde" 'the soil of home.' They had chosen a small cemetery overlooking all of Vienna as their final resting place, but it was destroyed by the Nazis (9). To Freundlich, who escaped the Shoah by going into exile in the U.S. and later returned to Vienna, the city was never again "home"; she asks, "Oh, if only I could erect this bird [the soul-bird memorial] to them as a last labor of love, but where? Near my grandparents' grave? It was desecrated and destroyed long ago. And even if it still existed, much too much has happened for it still to be home to you" (10). Rather than post-Shoah Austria, it is the Austria of the pre-Shoah era associated with her murdered and dispersed forebears that Freundlich considers her real home. For Ruth Klüger, who was deported while still a child, and who survived the concentration camps of Theresienstadt and Auschwitz, Vienna was and continued to be alien territory: "The city is neither strange nor familiar to me, which means, of course, that it is both: familiarly strange. It was always a joyless place, and hated children—hated Jewish children to the core" (*weiter leben* 68).

Also Vladimir Vertlib, who was born in Leningrad in 1966 and embarked with his parents on an odyssey from Russia to Israel, Austria, Italy, Austria, the Netherlands, Israel again, Italy again, Austria again, the United States, and finally Austria yet again, articulates lingering suspicion concerning Vienna. In 1999 he wrote: "It is understandable that my parents could not regard Austria, the home of Hitler and many 'smaller' Nazis, as a second home. During the war numerous of their relatives had been murdered in White Russia by the German occupation forces, and as recently as twenty years ago every third pedestrian on the streets of Vienna could possibly have been one of the murderers" ("Schattenbild" [Phantom] 105). Regarding his decision to leave Vienna and move to Salzburg, Vertlib

downplays any Jewish considerations: "I had private reasons for making the move, so the positive aspects of this change of scenery were always foremost in my mind" ("Jude, wie interessant" 105). The author moved to the Austrian province knowing that it was not "Vienna; it wasn't even Graz, Czernowitz or Brünn," and "has played virtually no role in Jewish history." He defies the warnings of Viennese Jewish friends, revealing that his worst experiences with anti-Semitism occurred during his underprivileged youth in Vienna. "The things I heard as a kid in the tenements, on the streets or in the subways would later be hard to top. Maybe that's why I had already become so inured to the fascism in everyday life . . ." (105). For Erich Fried, Austria, specifically postwar Vienna, was associated with his memories as a crime victim and the child of a murder victim, but he was still drawn to the place of his childhood despite his lingering apprehensions. At the turn of the millennium these apprehensions still haunt Vertlib, an author and Fried's junior by more than four decades and a relatively recent arrival in Austria. The passing of time does not seem to have lessened the trauma, even though most of those who now remember are neither eyewitnesses nor even descendents of the people who experienced the Nazi takeover in Vienna. In their works they write about violence and aggression directed at them as Jews. Especially since the Waldheim affair, the radicalization of the Viennese public sphere has become a primary issue of concern. Ruth Beckermann in *Die papierene Brücke* and Doron Rabinovici in *Papirnik*, especially the story "Der richtige Riecher," record verbal and physical attacks on Jews in the center of the city by rightwing and racist Austrians. Vladimir Vertlib mentions random hostility as an everyday occurrence ("Jude" 105-06).

From the late 1940s to the twenty-first century, literary works have linked traumatic memories and the experience of mistreatment with Austria, notably Vienna. Authors of different generations have reflected on the Nazi crimes from a variety of perspectives, drawing different conclusions according to their background and position. Following the larger cultural discourse, emphasis has shifted from the victims to their children and grandchildren, but the traumatic memory seems to have attached itself more or less permanently to certain sites. One striking example is the *Heldenplatz*, where in 1938 thousands of cheering Viennese citizens welcomed Adolf Hitler and

his troops, come to take Austria “back into the Reich.” Thomas Bernhard’s drama *Heldenplatz*, occasioned by the fiftieth anniversary of the so-called *Anschluss*, is perhaps the most controversial work featuring this site; however, the events associated with it were addressed in countless other works, including novels, memoirs, poetry, and autobiographies, as well as scholarly literature (see Lothar, Jandl, Douer and Haupt).

Aichinger’s novel *Die größere Hoffnung* (The Great Hope; 1948) was among the early post-Shoah works to map a cityscape of terror. A survivor of racial persecution, the author evokes sites she associated with mistreatment and persecution. She focuses on children, which enables her to lend terror a personal face—the face of innocence. Aichinger’s novel is a testimony to the disappearance of the Jewish sphere and rapidly increasing Nazi space. Even though the author does not name the city in her novel, its key episodes call to mind Vienna’s topography, including the Third District, from which the Jewish transports left and where her grandmother’s and her parents’ homes had been located. Other landmarks include the Zentralfriedhof with its large Jewish section, which became the children’s last refuge and playground, the Danube Canal, an amusement park and its rides—perhaps not the Prater but rather the so-called Bohemian Prater close to the Laaer Berg—the Leopoldstadt, and the Danube bridges. Aichinger’s short prose texts in *Plätze und Straßen* (Squares and Streets; 1955) and her later *Film und Verhängnis* (2003) identify locations and name specific streets and places. One text, “Stadtmitte,” associates magazines “in the shade” with the inner city (*Plätze und Straßen* 19), calling to mind both warehouses and rifle magazines and pointing to the armed plundering of city warehouses, many of which had been owned by Jews. Another text portrays the Judengasse as a site of devastation; the stores that still exist or exist again, the text reveals, are now seldom visited: the stairs leading up to them are overgrown with grass (*Plätze und Straßen* 19). “Verbindungsbahn” (Junction Line) draws attention to the trains used for deportation (10) at the Aspangbahnhof, located in the Third District, and “Landstraße,” where the Jewish prisoners were rounded up for transport to the death camps. Aichinger’s text sketches the horrific experience of three sisters returning home after a dance: they find their father murdered and observe the departing

trucks, the closing of their coffee house, the removal of furniture, and the closing of their school. In Aichinger's volume *Kurzschlüsse* (Short Circuits; 2001), texts from *Plätze und Straßen* are reprinted, deliberately making them a part of the current discourse on Vienna's past. The texts are arranged by district: "Innere Stadt" (Wien I, 5.2%), "Landstrasse" (Wien III, 7.1%), "Leopoldstadt" (Wien II, 29.7%), "Alsergrund" (Wien IX, 11.8%) "Josefstadt" (Wien VIII, 3.4%), and "Döbling" (Wien XIX, 2.8%)—the statistics of 1923 reveal the high concentration of Jews in these neighborhoods (Freidenreich 214).

From her perspective as a survivor of the Shoah and World War II, Aichinger portrays Vienna as a scene of different types of atrocities. "Gonzagagasse" refers to a site from which Jews were deported in 1941; however, the lines "Die Flammen aus den Speichern hat der Himmel genährt . . . Er begeisterte sie an den Pfeilerhölzern der Brücken" 'Heaven nourished the flames from the attics . . . it inspired them with the wooden uprights of the bridges' also call to mind the Allied bombings in 1943/44 and the destruction of the Danube bridges, events both horrifying and welcome to persecuted individuals such as Aichinger and Ellen, the protagonist of her *Die größere Hoffnung* (16). Aichinger refrains from defining and personalizing the perpetrators; rather, she focuses on the effects of their actions, such as empty living spaces, de-populated neighborhoods, grass growing on stairs, and burning bodies as she does in a short text about a particular neighborhood in the Second District, the Werd, a site reminiscent of a major pogrom in the seventeenth century and, again, in 1938 (*Kurzschlüsse* 30). The approach used by Friedrich Torberg, by contrast, identifies victims and perpetrators, Jews and Nazis, in the novel fragment *Auch das war Wien* (That, Too, Was Vienna; 1938/39). The protagonist, a Jewish-Austrian journalist named Hoffmann, who considered himself assimilated, is gradually stripped of his Austrian identity. Torberg associates the Leopoldstadt and the inner city, notably the area around the Stadttempel, with Nazi crimes. His protagonist witnesses the crimes against his Jewish friends and associates, but manages to escape.

The Hotel Metropole, at the Morzinplatz, near the Danube embankment, which was destroyed just before the end of the war, had served as Gestapo Headquarters. This notorious site, where by De-

ember 1938 almost 21,000 prisoners had been registered, is the setting of Stefan Zweig's *Schachnovelle* (Chess Novella; 1943), a novella about an Austrian patriot, a monarchist, who survives solitary confinement and mental torture through a unique strategy that drives him, however, to the brink of insanity. Aichinger refers to the same site more than once as the vicinity where she and her mother were forced to live. She writes in *Film und Verhängnis*: "At a time when the Gestapo building had not yet been transformed into a memorial, my mother and I had been assigned to live in a house very near it" (54; see also 202). The episodes at the embankment in *Die größere Hoffnung* take place in the immediate proximity of this prison.

In other words, in literature and autobiographical writing the association of Vienna with Nazi crimes began before 1941. A whole topography of the Nazi crime sites had emerged by the 1960s, when the children of survivors and perpetrators began to reflect on the legacy of the Nazi past. In the novel *Die Ausgesperrten* (Those Who Were Locked Out; 1980), Elfriede Jelinek situates robberies that were instigated by the children of a former Nazi perpetrator in Vienna's Stadtpark 'City Park.' The elegantly manicured park is more commonly known for its dairy farm dating back to the times of the Empire, and Hübner's Kursalon, an upscale tourist restaurant featuring Viennese waltz music and dance performances. In keeping with leftist theory—Jelinek was a member of the communist party—the author situated her youthful perpetrators, the Witkowski twins, in the Josefstadt, a district "inhabited by the petty bourgeoisie, especially shopkeepers and retired people," leaving unstated the fact that prior to 1938 many Jews lived there as well. Thus she defines a post-Nazi milieu in terms of class, neighborhood, and Jewish absence. Old Mr. Witkowski might conceivably have taken over, or "aryanized," the place where he and his family live and meet their violent deaths at the hands of his son. Moreover, Jelinek's novel reveals that all social groups are affected by the past. The associates of the Witkowski twins include the young worker Hans, living with his mother in a modest apartment in the Kochgasse, also in the Eighth District, and Susie, an upper-class girl raised in the splendor of a suburban Biedermeier mansion. Rainer Witkowski's massacre of his parents and twin sister is constructed as a continuation of pre-1945 history, though it is based on a case from the 1960s in which, in the absence

of fascist party and military structures, father Wunderer tyrannized his family until finally his son Rainer, frustrated over being excluded from real social advancement and driven to distraction by his father's antics, turned his directionless hatred against his family, and, in an ecstatic fit of rage, the kind Klaus Theweleit in *Männerphantasien* termed "White Terror," killed all of them.

Ingeborg Bachmann's Vienna is also an ominous place. The protagonist of the novel fragment *Der Fall Franza* (The Franza Case; published posthumously in 1981) meets her demise in Vienna by marrying Dr. Jordan, a man who marries women just to exploit and ruin them. The short story "Das Gebell" (The Barking; *Simultan* 106-28) provides further insight into the same character's criminal mentality: Jordan treats everyone close to him, even his old mother, with extreme callousness and manipulates people without their realizing it; a master criminal who commits transgressions against his fellow humans for which he cannot be held liable, he epitomizes the concept of everyday or ordinary fascism which Franza introduces later in the novel. The story "Unter Mördern und Irren" (Among Murderers and Madmen; *Das dreißigste Jahr* [The Thirtieth Year] 92-102) examines several former Nazi characters who were never held responsible for their acts; they seem impervious to criticism and continue to destroy those who want to bring them to justice. Bachmann shows that the perpetrators are well-situated Viennese citizens. They hold prominent positions and reside in the privileged parts of the city and exclusive suburbs, as is the case with Jordan, the former Nazi doctor, who torments and ultimately destroys his young wife emotionally and economically. Bachmann is fascinated by the concept of the undetectable crime, especially the "perfect" crime of Austrian Nazis. She raises the issue that Austria—which as an entire nation assumed the role of the first victim of Nazi aggression—and individual Austrian Nazis succeeded in shirking responsibility for their involvement in National Socialism. Jordan embodies the "Geschichtslüge," the historical lie on which the Second Republic was based. He is the master criminal who cannot be caught. These motifs in Bachmann preempt some of the issues addressed by the second and third post-Shoah generation, including authors such as Peter Henisch and Doron Rabinovici.

In his autobiographical novel *Die kleine Figur meines Vaters* (The

Small Statue of My Father; 1987) Henisch, a Viennese author born in 1943, combines the story of a dying man, Henisch's father, with that of the son's growing suspicion regarding the father's past. Suffering and on his deathbed, the dying protagonist evokes compassion; however a photo that shows him in a military cap with a German Eagle while he is holding his baby son has aroused the son's suspicion. The father had worked for the socialist *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, where his son had also begun his career, but he had survived the war because he had been a war photographer and, technically speaking, a Nazi collaborator. Henisch's narrator grew up in postwar Vienna and has difficulty assessing what is fact and what is fiction. Like the young men in Rabinovici's *Suche nach M.*, he has heard only bits and pieces about the past and assumes the role of a detective in order to be able to interpret his own position in the present. In his search for clues, he realizes that in school and in youth organizations his father had to defend himself against his teachers' and fellow students' notion that he was Jewish, and he became a particularly eager participant in the Hitler Youth and other Nazi organizations. Unable to resolve the complex issues of identity and loyalty, the narrator is left alienated and perplexed.

The same ambivalence resulting from a lack of understanding permeates Henisch's novel *Steins Paranoia* (1988), the story of a Viennese man of Jewish descent in Vienna at the time of the Waldheim scandal. Up until this time, Henisch's protagonist, married to a non-Jewish Viennese woman, has been unwilling to examine his relationship with his wife and with his native city in light of the post-Shoah situation. It takes an encounter with a self-confident American Jewish exchange student, Clarisse, who is researching Vienna's Jewish past, for Henisch's protagonist to realize why he feels so uncomfortable in both his home and his native city: wherever he goes there are traces of the suppressed genocidal past. At home he notices his wife's anti-Semitic attitudes (53). Out in the city he begins to search for remnants of the Jewish past, doing so with the same attention to locale and topographical detail as other authors trying to uncover and preserve the memory of the Shoah: Aichinger, Schindel, and Beckermann. Henisch's protagonist discusses among other places the house in the Gentzgasse where the Jewish critic Egon Friedell committed suicide in order to escape from the Nazi hench-

men who had come to arrest him. Stein also becomes aware of the gap in the row of houses at the Schwedenkai left by the former Hotel Metropole, which had been converted into the Gestapo prison and was later destroyed, and he visits the unmarked sites of synagogues destroyed in the 1938 pogrom. At the same time he pays attention to manifestations of the new, vocal anti-Semitism in Vienna's inner city: at the cinema at the Graben he observes a group of young men yelling "Wir wollen keine Juden" 'No Jews!'. Ironically, in his attempt to avoid clashing with the anti-Semitic mob, he walks hurriedly toward the Danube embankment, the very site that in earlier texts was associated with the deportation of Jews. Other works, such as Beckermann's essay "Beyond the Bridges," portray the Danube Kai as a transitional space between the First and the Second District. The Kai separated the Inner City, with its Jewish-owned textile businesses and the Stadttempel, and the Leopoldstadt, also known as the "Mazzesinsel," a neighborhood favored by immigrants and the location of numerous destroyed temples and synagogues. Beckermann reveals that even after the destruction of the Jewish communities on the other side of the Danube the sense of difference—of a separate world—remained. In other words, Henisch's Stein runs towards the destroyed Jewish sites, which may hold the key to the identity dilemma he faces: "I swerved in the other direction—Rotenturm Street, Schweden Square. In front of the ice cream parlor, a couple of boys were trying to squash a tiny frog" (Stein 87). He seeks safety in an area that only a few decades earlier had been the scene of crimes of unimaginable proportions.

In his novel *Suche nach M* (1997) Doron Rabinovici explores the criminal consequences of the avoidance of Nazi-era memories. While the setting of his crime- and spy-novel is global, Vienna's inner city still represents the point of departure and the central site. In a multivalent and confusing environment Shoah survivors, former perpetrators, and their children interact, creating their own reality from an unprocessed and often misunderstood history overshadowed by the sites of Vienna and the contradictory and mutually exclusive messages that they send—for example the Lueger monument across from the avant-garde Café Prückl. The opening sentence in *Suche nach M*. characterizes this place in the following manner, which is emblematic of the entire novel: "Ten years after

the war the café, his favorite hang-out, had been remodeled. There was no trace of the walnut paneling of yore, no trace of the niche in which the manager had sat enthroned behind her wrought-iron till. The windows on one side of the café opened onto the former city building and courthouse on Prachtstrasse, those on the other onto a square and a monument to a world-renowned anti-Semite." In *Ohnehin* (Nevertheless; 2004) the author revisits the place, which, incidentally, is located vis-à-vis the Stadtpark, the scene of Jelinek's Wunderer crimes, as follows: "On the square in front of the café stood the monument to former mayor Karl Lueger, who had been the first to win elections by means of large anti-Semitic rallies and had therefore been revered by the young Adolf Hitler" (80; see also *Suche nach M* 7). Rabinovici's novel suggests that the silence that the survivors and the former perpetrators share is a major source of the identity problems young people of different backgrounds face—Jews, non-Jews, and recent Muslim immigrants. Ultimately, Rabinovici's characters become involved in crime—as petty criminals, murderers, or secret agents, seemingly because their socialization takes place within a history of crime. In a society viewed as criminal, the conventional serial sex-killer featured by Rabinovici constitutes the rule rather than the exception in an urban landscape replete with memories of atrocities. Within the context of the still "unbewältigte Vergangenheit" 'unmastered past' an ordinary murderer, even though he becomes the object of the sensationalist media, seems almost negligible.

As the discourse on Viennese sites of memory associated with the Shoah and its aftermath expands, so does the number of locations that are marked and inscribed, figuratively and literally, as memorial sites. These include increasing numbers of neighborhoods, streets, parks, buildings, and public spaces such as coffeehouses, private residences, and apartment buildings. In *Ohnehin*, for example, Rabinovici examines the Jewish history of Vienna's most famous open-air market, the Naschmarkt, which he skillfully combines with several parallel plots, one of them dealing with near-victims of the Shoah, another with the exploration of a former SS-man's past and his children's attitude toward their father. The diverse milieu of the Naschmarkt becomes a site where it is possible for a Jewish character to live side-by-side with other outsiders and experience a partial

integration: "This place [the Naschmarkt] helped him [the orthodox Jew from Galicia] to feel at home in Vienna" (39). In its openness to marginal populations, the Naschmarkt becomes an emblem for Jewish immigration after the Shoah—for immigration to Austria in general. Rabinovici describes the quasi-extraterritorial space occupied by the Naschmarkt as a "wedge driven from the suburbs into the city center, forcing itself between the districts" (42). Noting that "in this neighborhood not just German, but also Italian, Yiddish, Greek, Turkish, Czech, Serbian, and Polish had been spoken for centuries," Rabinovici at the same time warns not to envision "ein idyllisches Bild . . . von bunter Vielfalt und froher Harmonie" 'an idyllic picture of gay variety and glad harmony' (78).⁴ Conflict, including transgression and crime, is also a part of the topography of diversity as Rabinovici and other contemporary authors see it.

A review of Austrian literature since the nineteenth century shows an increasingly close association between the representation of the big city and the fascination with crimes and the criminal. Like most major metropolitan areas in the twentieth century, Vienna inspired writers of crime and detective fiction, and works of high culture by authors such as Musil and Canetti also inscribed the Viennese landscape with the deeds of their fictional criminals. After the Shoah the focus of interest shifted from crimes committed by deranged, abnormal, and eccentric individuals to crimes permitted and encouraged by large segments of the population or even the government. In the 1930s Austrian authors began to record in their literary and autobiographical writings the atrocities committed under Austrofascism and National Socialism. These transgressions, many of which are still debated and negotiated in courts of law, changed the reputation of Austria's metropolis from a city of wine, love, and music to one of crimes and criminals. In the post-war era literature openly addressing the Nazi era was unpopular in Austria and elsewhere;⁵ however, the works by Austrian, especially Viennese, authors discussing Nazi crimes and the legacy of fascism in Austria's capital eventually caught the attention of international audiences. In conjunction with historical publications and documentary films about Vienna in the 1930s and 1940s, the works of literary authors such as Aichinger, Bachmann, Henisch, and Rabinovici contributed to shaping the current cultural memory of the

Nazi past. At the same, because of both the topographical specificity of Viennese literature tracing and confronting Nazi-era crimes and the renewed threat of rightwing violence and hate crimes, certain locations in Vienna linked with the memory of atrocity serve as a warning. Sites such as the empty space left by the Hotel Metropol, Sigmund Freud's home and practice, streets and neighborhoods named in the works of now three generations of survivors have become known to readers of literary and historical texts. They have become memorials of the Nazi past and, like official monuments, they attract travelers, tourists, and mourners.

Notes

1 On crime and the city, see Tatar, *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany*. Some other studies include Asbury's *The French Quarter*, *The Gangs of Chicago*, and *The Gangs of New York*, Cohen's *Tough Jews*, and Rose's *New Orleans, Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red-Light District*. *The Sopranos* is devoted entirely to the life of gangsters and has been discussed in scholarly studies such as Gabbard's *The Psychology of the Sopranos*, which explores why the series resonates with the American public, and Simon's *Tony Soprano*, which examines the protagonist as part of the American Dream.

2 See Lessing and Berg's *Monsters of Weimar*, a discussion of the bizarre case of the cannibal Haarmann and the serial killer Kürten.

3 Peter Nusser observes about the traditional detective and crime novel that "unter allen Figuren des Detektivromans hat das Opfer den geringsten Stellenwert" (40).

4 One sequence in Seelich's film *Kieselsteine* also features the Naschmarkt in a scene revealing the ethnic diversity of this part of Vienna. The viewer sees several Jewish men in traditional clothes appearing very much at ease among the many different groups and individuals.

5 Veza Canetti had written *Die Schildkröten* (1999) about Jewish experience after the annexation of Austria, detailing Nazi practices such as intimidation.
<https://newprairiepress.org/stcl/vol31/iss1/11>
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tion, fraud, theft, and murder, immediately after arriving in her exile country, England, in 1939. The setting of the novel, Grinzing and Döbling, corresponded with her and her husband's last addresses before their escape. In a letter to Wieland Herzfelde in 1947, she complained that she could find no publisher for her novel "weil auch Nazi darin vorkämen" (Schedel 314).

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